



Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

Issue 36

January, 2011

This newsletter is published by the American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit, U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. If there are any particular topics you are interested in, please contact ACS at: ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

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Special points of interest:

- * News: Wine, women ... and an extortionate bill
- * Reminders to Parents of Newborn Children

Travel Advisory: Lunar New Year

American Citizens Services extends warm holiday greetings. We wanted to remind you of a few tips in preparation for the holiday season.

The Lunar New Year is the busiest time for travel within China. Chinese news reports estimate there will be 230 million people traveling during this **year's month-long** holiday period, a 12.5 percent increase from the number of travelers last year. Consequently, from now until the end of February, airlines booking tickets for travel originating and ending *within mainland China* (excluding Hong Kong and Taiwan) are requiring travelers to have their tickets issued as soon as possible. Some airlines may only keep the reservation at most two hours during this period. Though there are no reports indicating travel to destinations outside of China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan) are affected, we highly recommend booking airline reser-

tions as soon as possible during this busy travel season.

Please keep your eyes (and/or hands) **on your belongings**. It's easy to be lulled into a false sense of security here in East China (Shanghai, Zhejiang, Anhui, Jiangsu). The level of crime, even here in Shanghai, is generally lower than in comparably-sized cities else-where. **However, Shanghai is still a "Big City"** with its share of unbelievably talented pickpockets and bag-snatchers. We receive frequent reports from residents and visitors about the theft of wallets and bags and most recently iphones from various locations – restaurants, hotels, clubs, etc – that they would have otherwise considered quite secure.

Regards,

American Citizen Services

U.S. Consulate General, Shanghai

Upcoming Holidays and Other Closures

The American Citizen Services Unit will be **CLOSED** on the following days:

February 2-6, Wednesday-Sunday:

Chinese (Lunar) New Year

February 21, Monday:

President's Day

News: Wine, women ... and an extortionate bill

SCANTILY clad women offering wine and fruit were part of a gang that duped foreigners into paying extortionate amounts for food and drink, prosecutors said yesterday.

The group, which targeted tourists and expats, has been charged with transaction by force, according to Yangpu District prosecutors.

They rented compartments in a karaoke bar in Yangpu District to carry out the scam. A gang member was assigned to befriend foreigners on the street and lure them back to the bar. There the victim would be given something to eat and drink and then forced to pay a hugely inflated bill, prosecutors said.

One of the gang's victims was Tony Pan, an American, who arrived in Shanghai in early June last year from

Thailand. He was walking on Pujian Road on the night of June 6 when a man asked if he wanted a Thai massage. Having just experienced massage in Thailand and enjoyed it, Pan agreed.

In the karaoke bar, Pan found two women in skimpy clothes waiting for him with fruit and wine laid out on a table. They asked him to taste the fruit and drink some imported wine, which Pan did.

Seeing that no massage was on offer, Pan decided to leave but was given a bill of more than 17,000 yuan (US\$2,564). When Pan refused to pay and had a dispute with the man who had approached him on the street, three other men, armed with sticks, appeared and threatened to beat him.

Pan had to use a credit card to pay, prosecutors alleged. After leaving the karaoke bar, Pan called the police.

The gang was detained in October and its leader, a man surnamed Chen, confessed that members would divide the money immediately after their victims paid.

Police are still investigating how many victims the gang cheated.

Read more:

http://www.shanghaidaily.com/sp/article/2011/201101/20110108/article_460966.htm#ixzz1BSnQVto2

*(From Shanghai Daily January 8, 2011
Angela Xu)*

Security Situation - Travel Warnings and Alerts

Security reminder: It is advisable that you and your family review your personal security profile and to be aware of your surroundings at all times.

Since our previous Newsletter, the U.S. Department of State has issued new Travel Warnings for the following countries:

<u>Tunisia</u>	01/16/2011
<u>Central African Republic</u>	01/14/2011
<u>Niger</u>	01/12/2011
<u>Nepal</u>	01/12/2011
<u>Sudan</u>	01/07/2011
<u>Kenya</u>	12/28/2010

Travel Warnings are issued to describe long-term, protracted conditions that make a country dangerous or unstable. A Travel Warning is also issued when the U.S. Government's ability to assist American citizens is constrained due to the closure of an embassy or consulate or because of a drawdown of its staff.

This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/tw/tw_1764.html.

The U.S. Department of State also has issued new Travel Alerts:

South Pacific Cyclone Season 12/23/2010
Europe - Terrorism 10/03/2010

Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information about short-term conditions generally within a particular country or region that pose imminent risks to the security of U.S. citizens. Natural disasters, terrorist attacks, coups, anniversaries of terrorist events, election-related demonstrations or violence, and high-profile events such as international conferences or regional sports events are examples of conditions that might generate a Travel Alert. This information is available at http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/pa/pa_1766.html.

The most up-to-date information regarding permitted and prohibited items on flights can be viewed online at <http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/prohibited/permitted-prohibited-items.shtm>.

For additional information, please visit "Americans Traveling Abroad" on the U.S. Department of State website: http://travel.state.gov/visa/americans/americans_1252.html. Students traveling abroad may wish to visit the State Department site designed for them: <http://studentsabroad.state.gov/>.

To obtain up-to-date information on security conditions, please call 1-888-407-4747 (toll free in the United States), or +1-202-501-4444 if you are outside the United States.

You may also visit the Consular Affairs twitter page at <http://twitter.com/TravelGov>.

Social Security Administration Q & A

The American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit has compiled a list of commonly asked questions regarding Social Security issues. More Q & A can be found at <http://ssa-custhelp.ssa.gov/>.

Q: Where can I get Social Security assistance when I reside in China?

A: You may contact the Asia Pacific Rim unit of the SSA International Operations in Manila for assistance. The SSA office in Manila is configured to be like a U.S. stateside district office, providing many of the same services and functions. Its primary function is to administer SSA programs and services for people residing in the East-Asia Pacific Region. Ways to contact the SSA office in Manila are listed below.

Mailing Address:

Social Security Administration
U.S. Embassy Manila

1201 Roxas Boulevard, Ermita, 0930
Manila, Philippines

Phone: (632) 301-2000 8:00 AM to
4:00 PM, Monday through Friday

Fax: (632) 522-1514

Email: FBU.Manila@ssa.gov

Website:

manila.usembassy.gov/wwwaha013.html

Q: Can I apply for a Social Security Number (SSN) at the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai?

A: Yes. You may apply for a SSN at the American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit of the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. ACS will then forward your application to the SSA office in Manila for further processing. Due to varying diplomatic pouch mail pickup times and delays, it typically takes 3-6 months to receive a Social Security card in China. Please consult with the SSA office in Manila or ACS on what to bring before you come to ACS to submit your application.

Q: Is there any way for me to know the SSN sooner?

A: Yes. Since the Social Security card will be mailed directly from the SSA office in Baltimore to the mailing address that you provide on your SSN application, you may wish to give a U.S. mailing address (of say, a trusted friend or relative) on your SSN application. Then, if you wish, you could ask that person to read the SSN to you over the phone and/or send it to you by fax or email. This will help you to avoid an extra 2 to 4 weeks for international mail delivery.

Q: I need the SSN to file taxes (file my income tax return). Can I request to know the number before I receive the actual card in the mail?

A: Yes. You may ask the ACS staff to add a note on your SSN application to request the SSA office in Manila to release your number once it's issued. Since the SSN can only be released when you appear in person, the SSA office in Manila will normally release the issued SSN to the ACS unit of the Consulate, and notify you to come to ACS to pick up your number in person. You may be able to know the SSN through this method in 2-3 months after you submit your complete SSN application to ACS.

Q: Can I apply for a SSN for my dependent to be used to file my U.S. tax return?

A: Your dependent is eligible for a SSN if s/he is a U.S. citizen or has been admitted by the United States for permanent residence or U.S. employment. If your dependent is not eligible to have an SSN, you may apply for an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) instead. To

apply for an ITIN, please 1) complete IRS form W-7, available at www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw7.pdf, 2) obtain a certified copy of your dependent's passport from ACS as a notarial service, 3) check the instructions with form W-7 for additional filing requirements, such as the need to include original, completed tax returns, available at www.irs.gov/instructions/iw7/index.html, and 4) mail the completed form, certified copy of your dependent's passport and other documents to: IRS, ITIN Operation, PO Box 149342, Austin, Texas 78714-9342.

Q: How can I receive my Social Security benefits when I reside in China?

A: Unfortunately, international direct deposit from the U.S. Treasury Department to accounts in China is not available yet. There are several other ways for you to receive your Social Security benefits payment if you reside in China.

Option 1: provide a U.S. bank account to the Social Security Administration and have your payment sent to the U.S. account. Then arrange to transfer/wire the funds to a local account or make withdrawals via ATM here.

Option 2: provide a bank account located elsewhere in the region if you can. Jurisdictions near China where direct deposit is available include Hong Kong and Japan.

Option 3: provide your address in China and have your payment sent by check to the ACS unit of the U.S. Consulate General. ACS will then forward the check to you via registered mail through the local postal system. Beneficiaries residing in the Shanghai consular district usually get their Social Security checks 4-6 weeks after the checks are issued in the U.S.

Reminders to Parents of Newborn Children

To help the parents of newborn children prepare the necessary documents for their newborns, we would like to inform you of the following:

1) Applying for a Social Security Number (SSN)

You may submit the application for a

SSN for your newborn at the American Citizen Services (ACS) Unit of the U.S. Consulate General in Shanghai. ACS will then forward your application to the Social Security Administration (SSA) office in Manila for further processing. It

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Delay in Processing Consular Reports of Birth Abroad

If you've tried to make an appointment recently to apply for your newborn child's first passport, you may have noticed that there are very few appointments for Consular Reports of Birth Abroad (CRBA) in January and February this year. The reason for the backlog is a worldwide change in CRBA processing. No CRBAs can be issued during the changeover from the old CRBA system to the new CRBA system. U.S. embassies and consulates around the world have suspended CRBA processing since January 1st of this year, and expect to resume processing in late January. We apologize for the delay. If your newborn needs a passport for travel abroad, please contact us to make arrangements.

[Background: U.S. citizens born outside of the USA are normally issued two birth-related documents: a local birth certificate issued by the local public registry through the local hospital, and a Consular Report of Birth Abroad issued by a U.S. embassy or U.S. consulate. The Consular Report of Birth Abroad contains much of the same information as a birth certificate, but also states that the bearer was a U.S. citizen at birth. The Consular Report of Birth Abroad is a prerequisite for the first passport of a person who was a U.S. citizen from birth, but born outside the USA. The CRBA is only issued to people who were U.S. citizens at birth; it is not relevant for naturalized citizens.]

What's the difference between a 'natural-born citizen' and a 'naturalized citizen'? The term 'natural-born citizen' refers to U.S. citizens who were U.S. citizens at birth. Under U.S. citizenship laws, there are two ways to be a natural-born citizen: (a) if you were born in U.S. territory or (b) if one or both of your parents was a U.S. citizen at the time of your birth abroad. Contrast this with 'naturalized citizens,' which refers to people who were not U.S. citizens at birth, but became U.S. citizens through the naturalization process.]

Leaving Shanghai Consular District?

If you are departing the Shanghai consular district after a long stay here and you formally joined the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), please do not forget to end your enrollment when you leave.

You can end your enrollment by visiting the <https://travelregistration.state.gov> site if you previously enrolled through this site.

If you previously submitted a paper registration form to the U.S. consulate, you may unregister yourself by sending an email request to:

ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

Criminal Record Checks and Fingerprinting

U.S. citizens may be asked to present a "certificate of good conduct" or "lack of a criminal record" for a variety of reasons for use abroad including permanent residence permission (visa), school attendance, employment, etc. U.S. law enforcement authorities may not be familiar with such a procedure since it is not commonly requested in the United States. There are a variety of options available to U.S. citizens seeking to obtain proof of their lack of a criminal record.

LOCAL POLICE CHECK: Go to your local police department where you reside or last resided in the United States, request that the police conduct a criminal records search and provide you with a document reflecting that there is no history of a criminal record. Local police departments may require your personal appearance in order to conduct the search. Your local police department can phrase this in whatever way they deem appropriate. The document should then be authenticated for use abroad following our guidance on authentication or legalization of documents.

FBI RECORDS CHECK: The [Criminal Justice Information Services \(CJIS\) Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/cjis) (<http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/cjis>) centralizes criminal justice information and provides accurate and timely information and services to local, state, federal, and international law enforcement agencies, the private sector, academia, and other government agencies. The subject of an identification record may obtain a copy thereof by submitting a [written request to the CJIS](http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/background-checks/background_checks) (http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/background-checks/background_checks). The request must be accompanied by satisfactory proof of identity (consisting of name, date and place of birth, and a set of roll-inked fingerprint impressions) and a certified check or money order for the \$18 processing fee. The FBI will not provide copies of arrest records to individuals other than the subject of the record. Requests should be directed to FBI CJIS Division, Attn: SCU, Mod. D-2, 1000 Custer Hollow Rd., Clarksburg, West Virginia 26306. If there is no criminal record, a report reflecting this fact is provided.

AUTHENTICATION OF POLICE OR FBI CERTIFICATES OF LACK OF A CRIMINAL RECORD: The FBI's CJIS Division will authenticate U.S. Department of Justice Order 556-73 fingerprint search results for international requests by placing the FBI seal and signature of a Division official on the results, if requested at the time of submission. Documents prepared in this matter may then be sent to the [U.S. Department of State Authentications Office](http://www.state.gov/m/a/auth/) (<http://www.state.gov/m/a/auth/>) by the requestor to be authenticated if necessary. Please be sure to indicate the country in which the document is to be used. The FBI procedure became effective 1/25/2010 and will apply only to documents finalized after that date. Requests to authenticate previously processed results will not be accepted. See the [FBI FAQ on this subject](http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/background-checks/faqs) (<http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/background-checks/faqs>).

Documents obtained from your local police will require additional authentication after you obtain the local police seal. **Contact your state Secretary of State's office** or other official designated in your state to authenticate state issued documents. See our [general guidance on authentication of documents for use abroad](http://travel.state.gov/law/judicial/judicial_701.html) (http://travel.state.gov/law/judicial/judicial_701.html).

GETTING YOUR FINGERPRINTS TAKEN: U.S. citizens should be able to obtain fingerprint cards from their local police departments. Most U.S. police stations will even do the fingerprinting. U.S. embassies and consulates DO NOT generally provide this service. However, you may wish to enquire with a private fingerprinting agencies as below:

- **In Beijing:** "Beijing Tongda Shoucheng Institute of Judicial Expertise Science" (北京通达首诚司法鉴定所). Tel: 010-6290-7011.
- **In Shanghai:** "Forensic Science and Technology Institute" (司法鉴定科学技术研究所司法鉴定中心). Tel: 5235-2957.

This information is provided for reference only and should not be construed as an endorsement or recommendation.

Shanghai Consulate News for Americans

U.S. Consulate General,
Shanghai, China

1038 West Nanjing Road, 8/F
Westgate Mall 梅龙镇广场

(Méi lóng zhèn guǎngchǎng)

Tel: (86-21) 3217-4650

Fax: (86-21) 6217-2071

After Hours Emergencies:

(86-21) 6433-3936

Open 8:00am - 11:30am

and 1:30pm - 3:30pm

Monday to Friday *Closed on
Tuesday afternoons, weekends,
and holidays.

<http://shanghai.usconsulate.gov>

Someone Asked the Consul:

Will the Shanghai Consulate host the Foreign Service Officer Test (FSOT) any time soon?

Yes, the next Foreign Service Officer test will be offered at the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai in February, 2011.

Additional detailed information can be found at <http://careers.state.gov/officer/selection-process> where you can also register to take the test.

If candidates have any technical questions or issues with the registration process, they should contact ACT, Inc. at fsot@act.org, or call (800) 205-6358.

Reminders to Parents of Newborn Children

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typically takes 3-6 months for the SSN card to arrive in China. We strongly recommend that you apply for one as early as you can. A completed form SS-5-FS (Application for a Social Security Card) signed by one parent, the same parent's U.S. passport, your newborn's Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA), and your **newborn's U.S. passport are required for this application.** We recommend that one parent submit the SSN application when he or she comes to pick up the newborn's CRBA and U.S. passport, so that these two tasks can be combined in one trip. Avoid unneeded stress and apply for the SSN well before the IRS tax return filing deadline. The Consulate has no way to expedite the 3-6 months processing time, so please plan ahead. If you have questions, please email to ShanghaiACS@state.gov.

2) Applying for a Chinese visa or a one-time Exit & Entry Travel Permit

Your child has now been issued a U.S. passport. As a foreign citizen residing in China, he or she will also need a Chinese visa or travel permit as required by Chinese law. You should apply for a Chinese visa or travel permit for your child at a nearby office of the Exit & Entry Bureau (EEB) in the province where the child was born.



- If both parents are U.S. citizens or non-Chinese citizens, you are required to report to EEB within one month after your child's birth to apply for a Chinese Visa. The Chinese visa will be placed in the **child's U.S. passport.**

- If one parent is a Chinese citizen, you are required to apply for a one-time Chinese Exit & Entry Travel Permit (different from a Chinese visa) at EEB in order for your child to travel outside of China. The Chinese travel permit will be an independent book. Once your child is outside of mainland China, you may take his or her U.S. passport to a Chinese Embassy or Consulate to apply for a Chinese visa so that your child can return to China as a U.S. citizen.

For details on applications for Chinese visas and travel permits, please contact the EEB office in your area. In Shanghai, the EEB hotline is (021) 2895-1900.